

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION**

MID-PACIFIC REGION

**SOUTH-CENTRAL CALIFORNIA AREA OFFICE
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA**

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**VEGETATION AND SEDIMENT MAINTENANCE PROGRAM AT LITTLE PANOCH
DETENTION DAM**

**Central Valley Project
Fresno, California
FONSI-08-34**

Recommended by:

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Date: _____

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DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

VEGETATION AND SEDIMENT MAINTENANCE PROGRAM AT LITTLE PANOCHÉ DETENTION DAM

In accordance with Section 102 (2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), the South-Central California Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) finds that the proposed action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for the proposed vegetation and sediment removal activities at the Little Panoche Detention Dam (LPDD). This Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) is supported by the attached Environmental Assessment, (EA) *Vegetation and Sediment Maintenance Program at Little Panoche Detention Dam* (EA-08-34).

PROPOSED ACTION

Reclamation proposes to implement a ten-year project for vegetation and sediment removal at the LPDD, which would be conducted by the Department of Water Resources (DWR).

The objective of this project is to improve water flow downstream from the dam's concrete spillway and improve DWR's ability to monitor flood releases and drainage from seep holes within LPDD. LPDD acts as sediment trap and prevents flooding of the San Luis Canal and land downstream of the dam.

FINDINGS

Aesthetics

The Proposed Action will not occur in the wildlife area that is visited by the public, and it will not create any nighttime light or glare or interfere with any scenic views. As no visual resources will be impacted, there will be no significant impact.

Air Quality

The Proposed Action would result in short-term emissions of vehicle and equipment exhaust and fine particulate matter (PM₁₀). However, as a result of the implementation of air quality protection measures, the Proposed Action will comply not only with Federal requirements, but with the more stringent California State requirements. Therefore, there will be no significant impact on air quality.

Biological Resources

Special-status species, including the Federally listed California red-legged frog and San Joaquin kit fox, may be adversely affected by the Proposed Action. However, the implementation of appropriate conservation measures will prevent a population-level effects, thereby avoiding significant impacts. Appropriate measures will also ensure

compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Proposed Action will not be taken until consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been completed on the California red-legged frog and San Joaquin kit fox, thereby ensuring that jeopardy is avoided for these species.

Cultural Resources

The Proposed Action will not affect historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.4(d)(I). Reclamation consulted with the SHPO regarding this undertaking on August 8, 2008. The SHPO concurred with Reclamation's findings and determination on August 18, 2008 (letter BUR080808A). As no cultural resources will be impacted, there will be no significant impact.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The Proposed Action will provide an overall benefit to hydrology, by improving flows in Little Panoche Creek. Short-term impacts on hydrology and water quality will be minimized by water quality protection measures, including those in a Streambed Alteration Agreement obtained from the California Department of Fish and Game. This will include working only during the late summer and early fall. These measures will ensure that the impacts on hydrology and water quality are no more than minimal and therefore not significant.

Wetlands/Waters of the United States

The Proposed Action will not fill waters of the United States, because the Corps determined that Little Panoche Creek is non-jurisdictional under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The Proposed Action has otherwise been designed to minimize the affected area of the creek as much as possible, and the impacts will not exceed the original fill that occurred with the construction of the dam. Therefore, the impacts on Little Panoche Creek will not be significant.

Cumulative Effects

The Proposed Action will not result in any direct or indirect impacts on aesthetic or cultural resources, and will therefore not contribute cumulatively toward any impacts on those resources. Impacts on biological resources will be minimized to a level that will not impact populations. Due to the fact that the affected area is owned by Reclamation, it is largely protected from future impacts on habitats in the area. Therefore, the Proposed Action will not result in more than a very minor cumulative impact on biological resources. Air quality impacts will be minimized to a level that ensures compliance with both Federal and State standards and will therefore only result in minor cumulative impacts. The Streambed Alteration Agreement and other protective measures will ensure that cumulative impacts on hydrology and water quality are no more than minimal. Impacts on Little Panoche Creek will not rise above the level that occurred when LPDD was constructed, and therefore the cumulative impact on wetlands/waters will be minimal.